In order to gather together in a common place, in addition to the tracks they leave they twist branches and handsful of grass at crossroads in order that their companions may know where to find them, they having prearranged the meaning of the signs.

[193] Another means of communication is by making fires. During our traveling about the Chaco we were continually surrounded by fires, either at close quarters or far away, fires which sometimes took on the proportions of colossal blazes. And often, when we thought that we were in absolute solitude, it would happen that upon approaching an Indian village we would be informed that we were expected, and we would hear tell of the order which had been observed in our march.

They make use, moreover, of many spies and informers. In Mataco the former are called niguaiecque, and the latter gu'éicáss.

They apparently do have some sort of tactical organization: thus they have a general chief, subordinate chief and petty chieftains. The first is called, in Mataco, canniat tizán, the second, canniat, and as for the last, I have forgotten.

The general chiefs are chosen at second remove, that is, from among the subordinate chiefs, who, in turn, are elected by the people. Normally a marked preference is shown for the late chief's sons, provided they be of age, courageous and good. But then, of course, we must say that in these elections the same passions are present which appear amongst us in our elections.

They also have another category of persons, whom they call nyát and corresponds vaguely to the Spanish "caballero" or the "galantuomo" of southern Italy. So it is that they refer to any white persons whom they consider of quality with the name nyát. It is to be supposed that a like distinction is made among the other Indians. In Peru and wherever the Quechua language is spoken, gentlemen are called Viracocha.

Once the general chief has been elected the subordinate elector chiefs go to call on him when they can, which visits are celebrated with the accustomed drinking and eating orgies. A general chieftainship almost always embraces villages far removed from each other.

The Matacos call those who visit them tzicki-ác.

The authorities among the Chaco Indians play an almost purely military role. In peace time they lose practically all their prestige,